DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 096 EA 018 258

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TITLE State-of-the-Art Facility: A Planning Process.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of School Business Officials (71st, Las Vegas, NV, September 29-October 3, 1985).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Change; *Administrator Role; Board of Education Policy; Curriculum Development; Design Requirements; Educational Change; *Educational Facilities Design; *Educational Facilities Planning; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Expenditures; *Futures (of Society); Individualized Education Programs; Lifelong Learning; *Long Range Planning; Multimedia Instruction; Prediction; School Community Relationship; School District Spending

ABSTRACT

Chief executive officers of school districts and facility planners must assume the role of change agent to meet the information needs of the 21st century. Public school learning, which will serve more groupings of people on a continual basis, will be disseminated through media learning centers. Management should follow six steps in planning program and facility strategies. (1) Be informed: Because the public will demand a careful rationale of funding expenditures, administration should act from an informed base. (2) Hire consultants: Professional school planning consultants should be experienced in educational programs and facility planning. (3) Conduct a comprehensive school study: Information gathered should contain demographic projections, community attitudes, status of school facilities, and district financial ability. (4) Select your architect: Administration should make available a prequalification questionnaire to architectural firms, a proposed project information sheet, and a team of educators to interview applicants. (5) Hire a construction manager: A construction manager should be selected at the time an architect is hired. (6) Prepare educational specifications: School district staff should define program goals, space requirements, and equipment needs to serve as a program guide to the design architect. (CJH)

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STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY: A PLANNING PROCESS

In the twenty-first century public education, as it is now know, is unlikely to exist to any appreciable degree. While dwindling energy resources, coupled with population growth, inflation, and the decline of the single family unit, may help to precipitate its decline, electronic ease and capability will be responsible for its fall.

Implications for the facility of the future will dictate that tremendous effort on designing for flexibility will have to occur--flexibility to change spaces immediately with a minimum of effort--flexibility to expand the facility with a minimum amount of cost and demolition.

Schools in the twenty-first century will be serving more people with a wider range of grade levels and ages, and for longer times during the day, night, and year than they are now. Adults will be the largest group of people served by the public schools.

Public school learning, adult learning as well as community education, will, in the twenty-first century, be disseminated throughout the community through media learning centers and controlled by a common pool of information from institutions, agencies, and organizations. Single family unit learning accommodations will exist, but, by and large, the education of youth will take place in learning studios residentially based in apartment complexes and condominium settings, where a modular style of living will prevail. Mediated learning will also take place in the living spaces of the home. Learning will also occur in a variety of other settings, among them business, industry, and an occasional

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voucher mall, where learning will be conducted on a satisfaction guaranteed, money-back basis. Whereas learning in universities will become increasingly research-oriented, giving rise to separate and distinct professional preparation centers, learning in community colleges will stress personal enrichment and paraprofessional specializations.

The educational arena is filled with numerous examples of once-proud and effective school districts that have failed to anticipate or accept purposeful change to enhance educational programs for students. Hundreds of our 16,000 school systems large and small have become pacesetters by spending generous amounts of time planning for the future of the students and communities they serve instead of living in the past.

The job of those directly responsible for administering a school improvement program has become increasingly difficult. In small school districts this duty often falls to the school superintendent. The superintendent's daily problems and hectic schedule as educational leader of a school system leave little time for creative thought or long-range planning relative to school facilities.

The board of education in a large school district may build schools more often than those in smaller units. As a rule, the school board member has limited, if any, experience in building matters. But school board members should have a knowledge of all aspects of the planning and contracting processes. They are, in the final analysis, held responsible for the kind of school buildings the community gets and for the reasonableness of their cost. As a board of education moves to provide additional school facilities, action should be taken only in

terms of a comprehensive community plan which has been fully integrated into all other aspects of community growth. In this aspect of school building advancement, the board of education can protect the community's interest best through a comprehensive school building survey.

School superintendents and boards of education are beginning to realize that in order to solve their facility problems, a cooperative effort must be made by local school systems and highly skilled school facility planners. School systems, colleges, and universities often contract with school facility planning organizations who specialize in providing up-to-date information that is vital to sound decision making.

Step One--Be Informed

The school administration and board of education must first act from an informed base. Taxpayers' rejections of school bond issues are now the norm rather than the exception, although the situation seems to be improving. The administration and school board must be able to show the people what they can expect for their dollars if they are to maintain an effective degree of community solidarity and support. The public will demand that all expenditures of funds be based on carefully obtained facts.

Step Two--Consultants

Employ competent school planning consultants . . . Professional school planning consultants serve as advisers to the administration and board in determining the program needs of the district. Such consultants should be experienced in educational programs and facility planning.

They also must have the expertise to provide up-to-date information, conduct studies or surveys as necessary, and develop educational specifications for specific facilities. Consultants function best when employed directly by the board of education. They should serve as representatives of the superintendent and school board in working with the administration, staff, commissioned architect, and State Department of Education.

Step Three--Conduct a Comprehensive School Study

The program of educational and community requirements, the first phase of a school building project, is a compilation of all data pertinent to the proposed school and should be so complete that the entire building may be envisioned. This program has as its base the statement of the philosophy under which the school will operate.

A well-planned program requires certain basic information. This information is often obtained by completing a comprehensive school survey. Such a survey should contain the following basic components:

1. Demographic projections . . . We know that we can anticipate an annual increase of 50,000 new births each year, well into the 1990s. How many school children must be accommodated in the next five years, ten years; at what levels, and where will they reside? After such a projection is made it will be reasonably easy to keep updated annually.

2. Instruction . . . What constitutes the district's instructional program? What teaching methods and inservice programs should be introduced? Are all the current state requirements being met? Are there courses/programs that should be offered that are not being offered? Is the school district prepared to educate students for the twenty-first century?

3. Community Attitudes . . . What are the community characteristics relative to education, employment, housing, recreation? What are their attitudes concerning operation of the school system and future educational opportunities? What changes, if any, would the community like to see made in the school district?

4. School Facilities . . . How educationally adequate and structurally sound are existing facilities relative to pupil enrollment and educational programs? Awareness of the impact that a school's physical environment has upon the teaching-learning process is gradually increasing. Students are affected by the type, condition, appearance and functional adequacy of the facilities they must attend. Consideration must be given to the facilities' capacity in providing the best atmosphere for learning. The school's educational adequacy can be adversely affected by deficiencies in available teaching spaces. Theoretically, capacity represents the largest number of students that can be instructed in a school without curtailing the desired educational program. Finally, an evaluation needs to be conducted of the existing instructional spaces to determine if the number and condition is sufficient for a modern day educational program.

5. Financial Condition . . . What is the school district's financial condition? How does the district's ability to support education relate to its effort? What funds are available to support needed programs and facilities?

The blueprint for educational excellence, in your district, will supply quality information for recommendations concerning long-range program development and refinement, necessary renovations and/or new

construction. Recommendations by a competent and unbiased source can serve as a basis for decision making by the administration and board.

Step Four--Selecting Your Architect

Selecting your architect will be the single most important decision you will make in your building program. If you make the wrong choice you will regret it for a long time. Most boards of education hire an architect only once or twice during their tenure. Conseuqently, they have no prior experience. Frequently, boards and superintendents feel their inadequacies and call upon educational facility planners for a method of selection.

In today's market, there will be many firms who are not only interested in your project but who are also capable of providing competent design services. Before a commission can be awarded, the client needs to establish some criteria for selection of the most suitable architectural firm for your particular project. The architect is paid to solve the problems that you have identified. His challenge is to design facilities that reflect your educational goals. Therefore, it is imperative that you match the architect to your project. Just because one firm amy have a good reputation for designing new secondary facilities doesn't mean they are equally as good at renovation of existing buildings.

A comparative selection procedure to determine who the architectural firm will be revolves around assessment of competencies. The following points should be considered:

A. Pre-Qualification Questionnaire A pre-qualification questionnaire should be developed by the school district and made available to all interested architectural firms. Once completed by the architectural

firm and returned they should be hand screened by the management team and facilities consultant. Those deemed the best meet the qualifications for your particular project are recommended to the board to be interviewed. The number to be interviewed should consist of at least three (3) but no more than five (5) firms.

The pre-qualification questionnaire should be designed to provide you with sufficient information about each firm to enable you to choose firms that have had the most recent experience and personnel to match your facility improvement goals. This instrument should contain questions that pertain to your particular project.

B. Project Information Sheet A project information sheet should be prepared which provides each architectural firm with as much information about the proposed project as possible. Each firm should then be informed as to the day, time, location, and length of interview, with instruction as to how the time is to be used.

If, after the first round of interviews the board and administration is unable to decide upon one firm then a second round of interviews should be planned. During the preparation period for the second interview key faculty and staff members should be made available to the remaining firms. Specific directions should be given each firm in order that they may develop some schematic sketches for the next interview. When preliminary schematic sketches are requested the school district should be able and willing to pay for this service.

C. Interview Team The interview team should consist of board members, administrators, faculty and community leaders. When these types of

people are involved it becomes more of a community effort. It allows more people to become involved in the decision process. The size of the interview team should not exceed fifteen (15) people.

D. Interview Guide The facility consultant and superintendent should develop a guide to be used by the interview team during each interview. The purpose of the interview guide is to assure that each firm has an opportunity to react to a series of identical questions. This will provide a better means of comparison between each firm.

E. Evaluation Form The evaluation form is used to mark responses at the time of interviews and make an overall rating at the conclusion of the interview. The evaluation form should contain such areas as personal characteristics, experience, staff potential, design qualifications, originality, attitude and follow-up services. By completing this form at the conclusion of each interview a balance of impressions can be reached pertaining to the order in which firms are interviewed.

Step Five--Construction Management

Construction management is an effective method for satisfying an owner's building needs providing a qualified firm is selected. The owner should engage the services of a construction manager at the very inception of the project; at the same time an architect is hired.

The construction manager is employed directly by the owner for an agreed upon fee to professionally manage the building construction. He is an independent planner with superb knowledge and competencies in the building construction field.

Special consideration must be given to the selection of a construction manager. If a true construction management firm isn't selected it would be better to go with a general contractor. Therefore, a comparative

selection procedure as used for the architect should be used to select the consturction manager.

Step Six--Educational Specifications

It's the educational program that really counts. No architect should be asked to design a building until a complete set of educational specifications has been prepared by the school district's staff.

Educational specifications define the educational programs to be offered, goals and objectives, space requirements, space relationships, special requirements, and furniture and equipment required. This document serves as a program guide to the design architect.

Although many conferences and discussions will be necessary, there is no substitute for written educational specifications. Educational specifications are most effective when developed by a team approach consisting of faculty, staff, educational facility planner, architect and construction manager.

Summary

Since the beginning of public education in this country, educational leaders in every age have been deeply concerned about the salient characteristics of the times and how cultural circumstances affect the educational needs of people. Chief executive officers of school districts and educational facility planners must bring about changes in the educational programs and facilities necessary to meet new needs and to cope with new circumstances. The role played by these two individuals in the twenty-first century will be, first and foremost, a change agent.

It is a challenge to educators, teachers, psychologists, sociologists and all those who help to form minds to free themselves from the past to

help plan the future. To meet the demands of the information age, management must begin now to plan educational program and facility strategies for the schools of the 21st century. It is the only choice we have.

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